CLAIMS

1.   A network access unit for restricting user access to signals transmitted on a local access network and comprising:

a port for receiving a channel request from a user;

a channel request vetting unit for vetting the request with respect to a predetermined list of permitted channels;

a transmitter for forwarding the channel request responsive to the vetting.

2.   A network access unit according to claim 1 additionally comprising:

a receiver arranged to receive control signals from a network headend for updating the permitted list.

3.   A network access unit according to claim 1 additionally in which a time is associated with at least one channel in the predetermined list of channels and in which the channel vetting unit vets a request for the at least one channel with respect to the time.

4.   A network access unit according to claim 1 in which the local access network is a shared medium access network.

5.   A network access unit according to claim 1 arranged to receive signals over an optical medium.

6.   A customer premises equipment comprising a network access unit according to claim 1.

7.   An optical access network comprising a network access unit according to claim 1.

8.   A service provider server arranged for connection to a network and comprising:

a transmitter for transmitting one or more content channels and channel control signals to a remote network access unit containing a permitted channel list;

in which the control signals are intended to update the permitted channel list so as to control subscriber access to the transmitted content channels.

9.   A service provider server according to claim 8 in which the control signals contain time-related information for association in the permitted list with one or more channels.

10.   A method of restricting user access to signals transmitted on a local access network comprising the steps of:

receiving a channel request from a user at a first port;

vetting the request with respect to a predetermined list of permitted channels;

forwarding the request responsive to the vetting.

11.   A method according to claim 10 additionally comprising the steps of:

receiving a control signal from a network headend;

updating the permitted list responsive to the control signal.

12.   A method according to claim 10 where additionally comprising the steps of:

associating a time with at least one channel in the predetermined list of channels;

vetting the request with respect to the time.

13.   A method according to claim 10 in which the channel request is carried in an IGMP message.

14.   A method of operating a service provider server comprising the steps of :

transmitting one or more content channels and channel control signals to a remote network access unit containing a permitted channel list;

in which the control signals are intended to update the permitted channel list so as to control subscriber access to the transmitted control channels.

15.   A method according to claim 14 additionally comprising the steps of:

receiving a user initiated request to change channel subscription details;

transmitting a permitted channel list update signal responsive thereto to a remote network access unit associated with the user.

16.   A use of an IGMP vetting function in customer premises equipment to provide secure multicast over a network.

17.   A use of an IGMP vetting function and a network receive address filter in customer premises equipment to provide secure multicast over a network.

18.   A program for a computer on a machine readable medium arranged to:

receive a channel request from a user at a first port;

vet the request with respect to a predetermined list of permitted channels;

forward the request responsive to the vetting.

19.   A control signal intended for transmission to a network access unit having a permitted channel list, comprising at least one message comprising network access unit permitted channel list update information.

20.   A control signal according to claim 19 in which the at least one message contains time-related information for association in the permitted channel list with one or more channels.

21.   A control signal according to claim 19 in which the control signals comprise IGMP messages.